

78. *North on a new Pachycephala.*

[Description of a new Species of *Pachycephala*. By Alfred J. North, C.M.Z.S. Rec. Austr. Mus. vol. v. pt. 2 (1904).]

The species described is *P. howensis*, from Lord Howe Island, allied to *P. gutturalis*, but distinguished by its olive-green tail, with a smaller and less distinct subterminal blackish-brown band.

The name "*meridionalis*" is suggested for the darker-grey-tailed form of the group of *P. gutturalis* from South Australia and West Victoria, in case it may be thought necessary to distinguish it from the West-Australian *P. occidentalis*.

79. *Wood and Finn on Birds from Upper Burmah.*

[On a Collection of Birds from Upper Burmah. By Lieut. H. Wood and F. Finn. J. A. S. B. lxxi. part ii. pp. 121-131 (1902).]

The collection there described was made by Lieut. Wood in the hilly districts of Upper Burmah, between 22° and 20° 15' N. lat., and presented by him to the Indian Museum, Calcutta, where it was specially acceptable as containing examples of several rare species. After a general description of the country, the localities visited are mentioned, and their exact positions are given. The list enumerates 77 species, among which *Parus palustris* and *Babax lanceolatus* are new to the Indian Fauna. In case the *Babax* should prove to be different to the Chinese bird of David and Oustalet, the alternative name *B. woodi* is suggested for it. A male specimen of *Phasianus humia*, obtained at Kampetlet, differs slightly from the typical form of Manipur.

XXXV.—*Letters, Extracts, Notices, &c.*

WE have received the following letters addressed to "The Editors of 'The Ibis'" :—

SIRS,—As in last year's 'Ibis' (1903, p. 149) the announcement of the scientific expedition sent out by the Imperial-Royal

Academy of Sciences of Vienna to Northern Brazil was noticed, allow me to offer a few remarks upon the subject. The journey of the expedition in the three Brazilian States of Bahia, Piauí, and Maranhão, together with the stay at Pará, occupied about eight months, from the middle of February to the middle of October 1903. The route selected was through the following places, in each of which a more or less lengthened stay was contemplated—Bahia, Zoazeiro on the river S. Francisco, Barra do Rio Grande, Santa Rita, the Lake of Paranaguá, S. Antonio de Gilboez, Santa Philomena, and, lastly, down the Rio Parahyba to its mouth. This long journey approaches the route of the celebrated traveller Spix in 1818 in two points only, and it was the leading idea of our expedition to attempt the solution of certain problems in the geographical distribution of animals in a district in which, for so long a period, little or nothing had been observed or collected. The weather and climate were favourable during the whole of our journey, and the people of the country traversed, as well as our personal staff, exerted themselves in a most satisfactory way to assist us in our work.

The extraordinarily dry and uniform "Catinga"-forest, which occupies the greater part of this extensive area, is not specially rich in birds. The most numerous examples of this class of animal life are members of the Neotropical families Tyrannidæ, Dendrocolaptidæ, and Formicariidæ, and to these groups our attention was specially directed. Of Psittaci, again, we obtained specimens of eight species, and of the Cracidæ and Tinamidæ examples of about eight species each in this district, without intruding into the original forest-region. We were particularly fortunate in our collection of the Raptores of the "Catinga"-region.

Our journey ended in Pará, where the members of the expedition received a most hearty welcome and hospitable reception from Dr. Goeldi, the Director, and the other members of the scientific staff of the Pará Museum. I hope and believe that the collections made during this expedition will receive careful examination, and that the result will

materially increase our knowledge of one of the least known portions of the Neotropical Fauna.

Yours &c.,

Sarajevo, Bosnia,
March 3rd, 1904.

OTHMAR REISER.

[Further information about this expedition will be found in the 'Ornithologische Monatsberichte' for March last (vol. xii. p. 49).—EDD.]

SIRS,—I have been much interested in the bird from New Guinea lately described by Messrs. Rothschild and Hartert (Nov. Zool. x. p. 448, pl. xiv. f. 1) under the name of *Eafa maculata*. The authors have attributed this remarkable type to the Meliphagidæ, although the peculiar structure of the bill, "not longer than the head and very wide, not running into a sharp point, but rounded off, just before the tip," points to quite a different family. My impression is that the bird belongs to the Dicaeidæ in the neighbourhood of the genera *Melanocharis*, *Urocharis*, *Pristorhamphus*, and *Rhamphocharis*. It is to the last-named genus that *Eafa* seems particularly akin; the bill is very similar, only somewhat longer; in the style of colouring also there is some likeness between *Eafa maculata* and the female of *Rhamphocharis crassirostris*, which has the upper and under parts spotted with whitish, although not so regularly as it appears in the figure of *E. maculata*. The white spots at the tips of the inner webs of the outer rectrices are almost of the same style in both birds.

Yours &c.,

Turin, Zool. Museum,
April 26th, 1904.

T. SALVADORI.

SIRS,—In the second part of the work 'Die Vögel der paläarktische Fauna,' p. 224, Mr. Hartert identifies my *Ammomanes assabensis* (Boll. Mus. Tor. no. 425, 1902) with *A. samharensis* Shell. B. of Afr. iii. p. 99, pl. xxi. fig. 1. The latter was described from Amba, in the highlands of Abyssinia; while my species is from Assab, a low sandy place

in a totally different region, not on the coast of Abyssinia, as stated by Mr. Hartert, but on the coast of the Danakil country, which we may practically take as part of Somaliland, which, as is well known, has a fauna different from that of Abyssinia.

My two specimens of *A. assabensis*, compared with the description and figure of *A. somharensis*, differ in having no rufous tinge whatever on the outer web of the remiges and rectrices or on the sides of the head; the bill looks smaller and straighter, and the dimensions are altogether smaller.

As stated in the original description, *A. assabensis* is very similar to *A. satoratus* Grant, only much smaller; the latter is from Southern Arabia, very near Assab, on the opposite coast of the Red Sea, approaching the strait of Bab-el-Mandeb.

Yours &c.,

T. SALVADORI.

Turin Zool. Museum,
June 23rd, 1904.

SIRS.—The drumming of the Woodcock and the bleating of the Snipe are well-known sounds in their respective haunts in spring-time. Hardly less remarkable are the clapping sounds made by the Common Wood-Pigeon and by certain Larks of the genus *Mirafra* when the ecstacy of love overtakes them. But these are exaggerated instances of flight-sounds, which almost divert our attention from the fact that hardly any bird really flies silently. The rushing noise made by a flock of Starlings as they pass with arrow-like swiftness to or from their resting-places in early morning or late evening cannot easily be forgotten, nor can the strange throbbing vibrations which reach the ear of anyone who happens to be under the aerial path of a flock of Cranes when flying low. But even a bird no larger than a Sand-Grouse or a Rook can make the welkin hum with its muscular wing-beats. I have seen and heard all these things, but not one of them seemed so wonderful as the weird noises emitted (as I suppose by the wings) of a party of Waders which came

under my notice on the road from Kimberley to Schmidt's Drift in South Africa. It was in the dusk of the evening of the 9th of August, 1902, that I witnessed this remarkable exhibition of bird-power. My companion and I were looking for birds by a small dam, when we heard a most curious and unusual sound far away in the sky overhead. It suggested some mysterious phenomenon of a thunder-storm or even of the supernatural—an indescribable, almost metallic hurtling through the air. More than once it was repeated, until presently we perceived that it emanated from a party of five or six birds, apparently *Totanus stagnatilis*, about to alight, in the course of a series of violent avalanche-like descents from the heights above. Every time a bird, as it were, crashed through the air in its headlong descent the sound was repeated. But, unluckily, not one of them reached the ground, as a member of our party in arriving frightened them away, so that, although I knew that they were Waders, I did not manage to identify them in the dusk. I think that the sounds were probably an intensification of those which I have heard emanating from the flocks of Ruff's and Reeves (*Machetes pugnax*) which frequent the dams of the Orange River Colony during the South African summer, and they, too, were doubtless only an amplification of those caused by the upward and downward swooping of the Dunlins of our own coast. Still, I have never heard anything like it before, and it so interested and impressed me that I should much like to receive the opinion of other and more experienced ornithologists on the question.

Yours &c.,

Kilmanock House,
Arthurstown, Ireland,
March 29th, 1904.

G. E. H. BARRETT-HAMILTON.

SIRS,—I have read with great interest Mr. Eagle Clarke's paper on "Bird-migration observed at the Kentish Knock Lightship" ('Ibis,' 1904, p. 112). As I spent nearly every day in September last searching for and watching the

migrants in East Sussex, I venture to offer a few remarks on it.

Mr. Eagle Clarke says (p. 116):—"Numbers of such migrants passed between the 18th and 29th of September. . . . Amongst the rarer species observed were an Icterine Warbler and a Blue-headed Wagtail." Later on (p. 117), he continues: "On the 25th September a Richard's Pipit was captured at the lantern."

On referring to my Diary, I find the following notes:—

Sept. 19. Numbers of Redpolls, several Pied Flycatchers, and numbers of Ring-Ouzels appeared near Hastings.

Sept. 21. During this past night the wind shifted from N.N.E. to S.E. On this day there was a very large movement of Siskins, Redstarts, Pied Flycatchers, Willow-Wrens, Chiffchaffs, and Swallows.

Sept. 22. Extraordinary numbers of Curlews near Rye, flying from west to east. I also saw adult Grey Plovers, and some Godwits and Black Terns. On the same day I shot a pair of Tawny Pipits.

Sept. 24. I shot another pair of Tawny Pipits. Hundreds of Meadow-Pipits came in from the sea and settled on the marsh (Rye) in large flocks.

Sept. 25. I shot a Great Reed-Warbler (*Acrocephalus turdoides*) at St. Leonard's.

Sept. 26 & 28. Many Blackcaps, Whitethroats, and Siskins appeared.

Sept. 29. Numbers of Pied Wagtails appeared.

During the first week in October I saw unusual numbers of Little Stints and a White Wagtail. On October 6th an Orphean Warbler was shot at St. Leonard's; and the same day I saw countless numbers of Meadow-Pipits moving from east to west along the shore. As I left home for several weeks on October 8th, I am not able to add any more notes.

Yours &c.,

MICHAEL J. NICOLL.

St. Leonard's-on-Sea,
May 17th, 1904.

SIRS,—During the past winter I have had the satisfaction of verifying the fact that the Carrion-Crow (*Corvus corone*) visits Sicily in winter, and is to be found there in considerable numbers between the months of October and April.

The occurrence of this species in Sicily has hitherto been looked upon as extremely doubtful, notwithstanding Malherbe's inclusion of it among the birds of the island, and it is only now that the doubt may be considered as entirely removed and *C. corone* allowed to take its place as a member of the Sicilian Ornis.

On the 30th of January last, through the kindness of a friend, I received a few specimens of birds, in the flesh, from the neighbourhood of Comiso in the Province of Syracuse, and among them was delighted to find an undoubted example of *C. corone*. I immediately wrote to my friend at Comiso for some more of the birds, and in a few days' time received two other specimens of the Carrion-Crow, together with three of the Rook (*C. frugilegus*), all obtained in the same district of Comiso. Finally, on the 21st of March, I received a fourth example of *C. corone* from the vicinity of Ragusa, also in the Province of Syracuse.

From the local "cacciatori" of the above-mentioned districts I learn that the "Cornacchie" (no distinction appears to be made by the Sicilian country-folk between the Crow and the Rook, and probably, through want of opportunity, the difference between the two species has not been noticed by them) visit the province of Syracuse regularly in October and November, spending the winter months there, and leaving again in the spring. Apparently neither species nests in Sicily.

The southern and south-eastern parts of Sicily seem to attract both the Crow and the Rook more than do the northern and central districts of the island, although in the latter also either one or both species may apparently be met with occasionally, and I have myself seen what, at the time, I took to be a flock of Rooks near the small town of Mezzojuso in the interior of the Province of Palermo. *C. frugilegus*, I may here observe, may often be seen in winter-time in large flocks

on the ploughed fields and cultivated land lying between Syracuse and Catania. The species has been mentioned by Doderlein and other writers on Sicilian birds as a regular winter visitor to the island.

I have lately also had the pleasure of obtaining in Sicily a specimen of Nordmann's Pratincole (*Glareola melanoptera*). This example, an adult male, was sent to me in the flesh on the 27th of April last from Marsala, having been shot in that neighbourhood.

This eastern species, so far as I am aware, has never hitherto been recorded from Sicily, and apparently it has only once before been obtained in Italy, the solitary instance of its occurrence in the peninsula being that recorded by Count Arrigoni as having taken place on the 5th of May, 1892, at Bagnolo, near Vicenza (Atl. Orn. p. 362).

Another "rara avis" for Sicily came into my possession last November in the shape of an adult male of the Lesser Redpoll (*Linota rufescens*), which was actually shot in my garden close to the town of Palermo, during my absence. This species appears to have been hitherto unrecorded in Sicily and Southern Italy generally, although it occurs in the north of the peninsula, and has occasionally been met with even as far south as Tuscany.

Though usually found in North Italy merely as a winter migrant, there appear to be undoubted instances of this species having nested in the Italian Alps.

Yours &c.,

JOSEPH I. S. WHITAKER.

Palermo,
June 4th, 1904.

An Ornithologists' Union for South Africa.—We learn with much pleasure that a scheme has been started for the formation of an Ornithologists' Union for South Africa. The opportunity was taken of the Second Meeting of the South-African Association for the Advancement of Science, in Johannesburg, to inaugurate this movement; and its supporters were summoned to the Government Normal Schools at that city, on April 9th last, to discuss the subject.

Mr. W. L. Selater, Director of the South-African Museum, Cape Town, presided, and representatives from all the South-African Colonies were present. After some preliminary remarks, the Chairman called upon Mr. A. L. Haagner, of Modderfontein, M.B.O.U., who, in response, gave some particulars of the steps which he had taken towards the realisation of the object in view. From this it appeared that a previous movement for the inception of a Union had been stopped by the late war. Now, thinking the time opportune for carrying such a movement into effect, Mr. Haagner had consulted with such well-known ornithologists as Mr. Thomas Ayres, Mr. W. L. Selater, and Dr. Gunning, and as a result had circularised numerous people throughout the sub-continent. He had received many gratifying replies, and had the names of forty intending members, twenty-one of whom lived in the Transvaal, twelve in the Cape Colony, four in Natal, two in the Orange River Colony, and one in Rhodesia. He suggested that Pretoria, with its zoological garden and museum, would form excellent headquarters.

Dr. Gunning moved formally that a South-African Ornithologists' Union should be formed, with a committee to frame rules and consider the matter of a journal, the committee to report on the subject.

Mr. Bicknell seconded the motion, and said that, to make the Union a success, they must have the right people and a journal. They had promises of support from some of the first men in South Africa, but the journal would be a great expense.

The motion was carried, and the following committee formed to report upon it:—Mr. Selater (Cape Colony), Dr. Gunning and Mr. Bicknell (Pretoria), Messrs. A. W. Millar (Durban), Alexander and Ellanor (Johannesburg), W. Macdonald (Pretoria), and Mr. A. C. Haagner (Modderfontein), Hon. Secretary *pro tem*.

An address was afterwards given by Mr. W. L. Selater on Ornithological Unions in America, England, and elsewhere.

Mr. Haagner requests that any British ornithologist who

may wish to cooperate in this movement will communicate with him, "Dynamite Factory, Modderfontein, Transvaal."

The Deutsche Ornithologische Gesellschaft.—The first number of the 'Journal für Ornithologie' for the present year contains a list of the Members of the German Ornithological Society. The President is Dr. R. Blasius, the Vice-President Herr Schalow, while Dr. A. Reichenow is the General Secretary, Prof. Matschie the Vice-Secretary, and Herr Deditius the Treasurer. The nine Honorary Members are Prof. Möbius, Dr. Bolle, Prof. Collett, Herr Herman, Dr. Krüper, Prof. Newton, Count Salvadori, Dr. Selater, and Dr. R. B. Sharpe. There are 138 Ordinary Members.

Dr. Finsch.—We are sure that all our ornithological friends will join us in feeling regret that Dr. Finsch has resigned his appointment at the Leyden Museum, in order to take charge of the new Ethnographical Division of the Municipal Museum at Brunswick. Dr. Finsch, as we all know, is deeply interested in Ethnology, and will, no doubt, be glad to return to his fatherland. But we shall be very sorry not to have his assistance at Leyden, where he has done so much good work of late years. Schlegel, who was appointed Conservator of the Ornithological Department in 1828 and Director of the whole Museum in 1858, catalogued some 18,000 specimens of birds, representing 2300 species, in his 'Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle des Pays-Bas,' up to 1882. After that time little was done among the birds until 1898, when Dr. Finsch took up the matter and began a new Catalogue, which contains entries of some 13,000 specimens, referable to 3000 species. We trust that an active ornithologist may be found to continue Dr. Finsch's work.

Hart's Museum, Christchurch.—We regret to learn that there is little prospect of carrying out the plan of removing Hart's Museum to Bournemouth, according to the arrangement referred to in our January number (above, p. 170). The

necessary sum, it appears, cannot be obtained at Bournemouth, although every effort has been made. We venture to suggest that the citizens of Southampton should take the matter up, as the Hart Museum contains a valuable series of Hampshire birds, well deserving proper display. The present collection of birds at Hartley College is in bad order and very imperfect, and ought to be replaced by another more worthy of the city of Southampton.

The U.S. National Museum.—In the ‘Smithsonian Report’ for 1901–2 (recently issued), under the section relating to the Department of Biology, of which Mr. F. W. True is Head Curator, the accessions to the collection of birds are described as follows:—

A valuable series of East-Indian birds, 281 in number, obtained in exchange from the Leyden Museum. A series of 161 Brazilian birds, obtained in exchange from the Paulista Museum, São Paulo, Brazil. Twelve birds from Cocos Island, including several specimens of the rare *Cocornis agassizi* (cf. ‘Ibis,’ 1903, p. 427). A specimen of the Thick-billed Parrot (*Rhynchopsitta pachyrhyncha*) from Arizona, being the first of this species obtained within the limits of the United States, presented by Mr. R. D. Lusk. We also learn that Mr. H. W. Henshaw has presented 14 rare Hawaiian birds, and that Mr. A. Boucard has contributed 16 Humming-birds in addition to previous donations. The collection of birds’ eggs has likewise received important accessions during the year, amongst which are eggs of the Everglade Kite (*Rostrhamus sociabilis*), of *Vireo atricapillus* from Texas, and also of *Larus schistivagus* and *Helminthophila peregrina*, both previously unrepresented in the collection.

From what is stated in the Report of the Assistant-Secretary (*op. cit.* p. 13), it would appear that the collections of the National Museum are very badly housed, unless, as we trust may be the case, great improvements have been recently effected. “An inspection of the buildings,” we are told, “shews conditions which are very deplorable. Every branch is seriously hampered by the total inadequacy of the space assigned to it, and the proper disposition of the specimens

has long ago become impossible, with the result that year after year valuable collections, often of large extent, have been packed away in insecure rented buildings, where they are, moreover, inaccessible." The halls are overcrowded, and an increase in space of from one-half to two-thirds at least is required to display their present contents properly.

The Scotch Antarctic Expedition.—Mr. W. L. Selater writes from Cape Town (May 9th) that he has just had the pleasure of greeting Mr. W. S. Bruce and the Officers of the Scotch Antarctic Exploring Ship 'Scotia,' on their return from their eighteen months' adventures in the South Polar Seas. The 'Scotia' had passed the previous winter at a harbour in the South Orkney Islands, where a new station for magnetic and meteorological observations had been established, and had made lengthened explorations in the adjacent seas. Mr. W. L. Selater has examined the collection of sea-birds made by the 'Scotia,' which he says is very ample, and contains examples of what is apparently a new Albatross of the genus *Phœbœtia*. On her way to the Cape the naturalists of the 'Scotia' had landed on Gough Island, a remote outlier of the Tristan d'Acunha group, and had obtained examples of the flightless Rail, *Porphyriornis comeri*, described by Dr. Allen in 1892 (see Bull. Am. Mus. N. H. iv. p. 57), and also of an apparently new Finch, probably allied to *Nesospiza acunhæ* of Tristan d'Acunha and Inaccessible Island (see 'Challenger' Reports, Zool. ii. p. 112, pl. xxiv.).

The Pennant-winged Nightjar at Lake Tana.—In his recently published 'Sporting Trip through Abyssinia,' Major Powell-Cotton tells us (p. 284) that he repeatedly noticed a pair of curious-looking birds flitting along the shores of Lake Tana. "It seemed for all the world as if each had a couple of attendant butterflies always fluttering just a little above it. At last, while I was lying motionless, half in and half out of a puddle on the rocks, one of them came and hovered about close to me, and I then got the solution of the puzzle. The butterflies were two streamers, each of which

ended in a feathery tuft, the fine connecting wire-quills being quite invisible at a little distance in the dim light. The birds, as I have since ascertained, were the Pemant-winged Nightjar, *Macrodipteryx vexillarius*."

The Honey-guide in S.E. Africa.—"On the way [to Narugwe's Kraal on the Pungwé] our attention was drawn to a little Honey-bird or Honey-guide (*Indicator sparmani*: *Incini* of the Zulus). On following it, we were led to a gnarled tree standing on the plain, and soon saw the hole in which the bees had taken up their quarters. With the aid of an axe and burning bunches of grass, and a smoking fire at the foot of the tree, a couple of our boys succeeded in securing a few of the combs, but they were rather 'poor.' After a few tit-bits had been placed on one side for our little guide, we proceeded on our journey."—*Findlay's 'Big-Game Shooting in South-east Africa,'* 1903.

The Guinea-fowl of the Waso Nyiro.—The Vulturine Guinea-fowl (*Nunida vulturina*) appears to be plentiful on the River Waso Nyiro, north of Mt. Kenia, British East Africa. Mr. Arkell-Hardwicke ('An Ivory Trader in North Kenia,' p. 206) writes as follows:—

"I had a good time amongst the Guinea-fowl, which here were of the Vulturine variety. They were exceedingly plentiful, and I managed to bag five in a very few minutes, all large and very handsome birds with long tails and light blue breast-feathers. They are most difficult birds to shoot, as they very seldom rise, but run over the sand at a great rate, keeping just out of effective range. In the absence of a dog the only plan is to run after them at full speed till by gaining on them—no easy task—they are compelled to get up."

The Spanish Colony of Rio de Oro.—In our notice (Ibis, 1904, p. 152) of Mr. Hartert's paper upon a collection of birds from the Spanish colony of Rio de Oro, on the west coast of N. Africa, we commented on its disappointing character, and suggested further researches, as the locality is quite unexplored and is interesting as being intermediate between Morocco and Senegal. We have now ascertained

that there is no difficulty in going there, as the Canary Interinsular Mail Steamship Company, under contract with the Spanish Government, runs a boat there once every month, and offers return tickets from Teneriffe to Rio de Oro for the sum of £2 10s. Here is a fine opportunity for one of our wandering brotherhood to visit a new country! At the same time we are told that Rio de Oro is not an attractive place (in spite of its name), as it is not safe to venture far from the walls of the Spanish fort without an escort, the natives being bitterly hostile.

Waxwings in Italy.—Writing in 'Nature' of March 3rd last, Dr. H. H. Giglioli, of Florence, calls attention to the visit of flocks of the Waxwing to North Italy last winter. He says:—"This winter we have had a considerable invasion of that beautiful northern bird, the Waxwing (*Ampelis garrulus*). During December and January last they appeared in hundreds in our northern provinces, and from Vicenza, Padova, and Verona spread in flocks westward and southward. I received the first specimens on December 18th, 1903, from Vicenza, and the last, from Barberino di Mugello (Florence) and from Fano (Marche), on January 1st and 15th. I also heard from Nice that more than 200 specimens of this bird, said to have come from Corsica, had been sold in the market there."

The Percy Sladen Memorial Fund.—We learn from 'The Times' of June 20th, that Mrs. Percy Sladen, the widow of Mr. Percy Sladen, a well-known zoologist, at one time Secretary of the Linnean Society, has given the sum of £20,000 to Trustees, who are directed to apply the interest of it to the promotion of scientific research, especially in the sciences of Zoology, Geology, and Anthropology. The first Trustees are Dr. Tempest Anderson, Mr. Bailey Saunders, Mr. Henry Bury, Dr. Henry Woodward, Prof. Howes, and Prof. Herdman. Ornithology, of course, comes within the scope of this magnificent gift, and applications relating to our branch of Zoology will, no doubt, receive due consideration from the Trustees.